

## Two Hands

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Category: Silmarillion  
Genre: Friendship, Romance  
Language: English  
Characters: Andreth, Finrod F.  
Status: Completed  
Published: 2016-04-11 15:48:00  
Updated: 2016-04-11 15:48:00  
Packaged: 2016-04-27 18:50:45  
Rating: K  
Chapters: 1  
Words: 301  
Publisher: [www.fanfiction.net](http://www.fanfiction.net)  
Summary: Two hands: one fair and young; one wrinkled and worn.

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"Will you permit me to stay here a while longer, Andreth?" Finrod asked as she poured tea during a break in their conversation. "Our converse holds far too much interest - for us both, I think - to stop now."

She looked up at him from under her brows, a quirk of a smile on her lips. "Then your interest in staying after nightfall is only in my words?" Her tone was light and teasing; he looked down, a flush rising on his fair face. She raised an eyebrow. "Oh indeed!" Setting the teapot down, she laid a hand over his.

"Look at our two hands there," she said, a trace of bitterness entering her voice. "Yours, as fair as if you were born but a handful of winters ago - when in fact you are older than the concept of winter itself - and mine, wrinkled and worn. See, there's dark spots on it, scars from hard work, and the skin has cracked and peeled away a dozen times or more. Your brother scorned this hand, seeing its inevitability, why should you do any less?"

Finrod looked up, turning his hand over and taking hers in his own. "Because, lady, it is your hand," he said softly. "And before it is gone forever from this world, I should like to hold it for a little while. Even as I would wish to kiss the mouth which speaks the thoughts within your mind, and gaze into your bright eyes."

She smiled, tilting her head in a faint approximation of a nod. "For a little while, then," she said, moving closer to him on the couch. Carefully he settled one arm about her, and they sat, now not speaking at all, in the light of the fire, until it was little more than dying embers.

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